

EXPELLING A DEMON

Skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཙེ་བརྟན།

I heard this story from Bad ma thub brtan (b. 1977) and added material for the sake of clarity.

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I, Bad ma thub brtan (b. 1977), am a *sngags 'chang* 'yogi practitioner', a disciple of Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje (1933-2009; FIG 1). This true story is about the sacred image pictured below (FIG 2) depicting Bla ma (center) and a sacred image (below Bla ma's image).

In 1986, the Mtsho sngon ge sar mgur glu 'gran bsdur, 'Mtsho sngong (Qinghai) Provincial Ge sar Dharma Song Competition' was held in Rta nag ma (Heimahe) County Town. Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje attended with his disciples to observe the competition. I was nine years old, and my name at that time was Shakya don 'grub. Father (Sngags 'chang gu ru, 1951-2016), was asked to meet Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje. Father and I both prostrated to Bla ma and presented *kha btags*. In return, he bestowed *khruś chu* 'pure water' and a protective image. Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje asked Father to send me to his monastery to learn Buddhist teachings and also gave me a new name, Pad+ma thub bstan dam chos rgya mtsho.

I was considered too young to go to the monastery until I was fourteen. Even at that time, I soon returned home because I was the youngest disciple in the monastery, and I was homesick.

When I was eighteen, Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje went to Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake) for a ritual and urged me to return to the monastery with him as his soothsayer. I went with him and have stayed at the monastery since.

Lung sngon 'front of a valley' Monastery is situated as the name suggests. In the 1890s, the monastery was founded by Bla ma smon

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lam bzang po (~1872-~1943), whose adherent, Pad ma rnam rgyal (*aka* Bla ma rgyab la, b. ~1933), is the current head of Lung skya.

Around twenty monks died for unknown reasons in the early years of Lung skya Monastery which, at that time, was a collection of black yak-hair tents. Lung skya Monastery had to move because of the dying monks and thus became a '*brog dgon* 'mobile monastery' that moved with the nomads to their pastures.

When Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje realized that the decreasing number of monks threatened the continuation of Lung skya Monastery, he asked Bla ma pad ma rnam rgyal for permission to resettle in the current location of Lung skya Monastery.

In the 1980s after the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and after receiving permission from Bla ma pad ma rnam rgyal, Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje and his monks camped at the foot of a small hill near the valley, living in small black yak-hair tents while Bla ma Pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje lived in a large tent. Every night, camp dogs constantly barked. Horrifyingly, early every morning one monk was found dead in the camp. Even more frightening was that dogs barked in a circle during the daytime, seemingly surrounding something. The number of dead monks increased to seven. Every night, the dogs barked frenziedly. It seemed they were chasing something.

At the time of these deaths, Monk Gar dbang gnam lcags (b. 1971) was fourteen years old and about 1.80 meters tall. He had a small tent, and his feet stuck out of the tent when he slept.

One night, Gar dbang gnam lcags dreamed of entering the main tent temple in the daytime when a monk with a golden bow came riding a horse with a big eye on one of its buttocks and leading another horse.

One night, when everyone went to bed, the pack of dogs started barking. Suddenly, the pack of dogs chased something as they ran through his tent. At the same time, something stepped on his left foot that was sticking outside. When he examined his bruised left foot the next morning, he found a horse-hoof mark.

Gar dbang gnam lcags immediately consulted Bla ma who said, "Don't panic! Stay calm. No harm caused! No harm."

Three days later, Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje announced that a giant *gdon 'dre* 'demon' was responsible for the troubles as indicated by Gar dbang gnam lcags' dream of the bow-carrying monk, and his horse – the one with an extra eye on one of its buttocks. The *gdon 'dre* was a former monk who went astray during a period of meditation.

To defeat the demon, Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje needed Drag sngags glang pa, a deity encompassed by fire, and a manifestation of Bla ma, so he asked a *lha bzo* 'divine artisan' (A bu kar lo, b. 1948) to visit. Lha bzo a bu kar lo was famous locally and was Bla ma's former student. He was asked to paint a naked red-colored male deity riding a demon. The painting was also to feature a list of Bla ma's former incarnations. Lha bzo a bu kar lo followed these instructions and painted a single original image. Monks then asked carpenters to engrave the original image on wooden boards, which they used to print this holy image on square white scarves. Finally, the printed white scarves were attached to the doors of demon-bothered monk quarters, homes with madly barking dogs, and such unclean places where someone had died violently and thus was unable to enter the intermediate world, lingering on as an invisible ghost. Herders who napped in such places had fearful experiences and might have even gone insane.

I gave Snying thar rgyal's family and Uncle Tshe b+ha's family photos of the original image. Both families belong to Chu ring (Qurang) Hamlet.

Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje explained that the giant demon rode a horse, circumambulated the world three times a day, and periodically visited our monastery. Therefore, Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje suggested pasting the image in front of a tent or house when dogs barked furiously.

After that, nothing terrible happened, and the dogs quieted. Nowadays, many locals request a better quality, more durable holy image from Lung sngon Monastery. Many families have such holy images.

MONK GAR DBANG GNAM LCAGS' ENCOUNTER

In about 1996, Lung sngon Monastery had some adobe rooms. Gar dbang gnam lcags' small adobe quarter consisted of a room at the entrance and another inside room. One night, Gar dbang gnam lcags was ready to cook noodles in his inner room. The door of the outside room was fastened with a latch, and a wooden post had been pushed against the door tightly. The inside room was also latched.

After noticing some indistinct sounds from outside, Gar dbang gnam lcags heard the latch clanking, and then the wooden post moved away. He felt someone or something enter his residence. Under his dim kerosene lamp, he couldn't see very well, but he became more anxious when the door of his inside room opened. Gar dbang gnam lcags couldn't detect any visible beings. Terrified and not knowing if something was inside his room, he fearfully locked the entrance door and then locked his inside room door.

Out of nowhere, his inner door opened, and then the entrance door opened. He felt the invisible visitor leave. Gar dbang gnam lcags was now so terrified that he felt the hair on his head standing straight up and rushed to another monk's quarter where he stayed for two days.

No one died during this time, Gar dbang gnam lcags believed, because of the holy image he had placed with many images of Buddha and holy *bla ma* on a shelf in his inside room.

Though the demon still exists and may try to harm other sentient beings, as long as the holy image is present providing protection, no harm can come.

FIG 1. Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje (second from right with Gar dbang gnam lcags) on grassland in Rta bo (Dawu) County, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, ~2005, Bad ma thub brtan).



FIG 2. A prayer wheel on top of Bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje's image, and the holy image (Drag sngags glang pa) leaned against a scripture volume (inside a Hyundai car in Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, 2018, Bad ma thub brtan).



TIBETAN TERMS

a bu kar lo ཨ་བུ་ཀར་ལོ།
 pad ma thub brtan པད་མ་ཐུབ་བརྟན།
 bla ma བླ་མ།
 bla ma pad ma rnam rgyal བླ་མ་པད་མ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།
 bla ma pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje བླ་མ་པདྨ་གཏུམ་དྲགས་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 bla ma rgyab bla བླ་མ་རྒྱལ་བླ།
 bla ma smon lam bzang po བླ་མ་སློན་ལམ་བཟང་པོ།
 chu ring རྩུ་རིང་།
 drag sngags glang pa དྲག་སྒྲུག་གླང་པ།
 gar dbang gnam lcags གར་དབང་གནམ་ལྷགས།
 gdon 'dre གདོན་འདྲེ།
 ge sar གེ་སར།
 gser chen གཤེར་ཆེན།
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།
 khru chu ཁུ་ཆུ།
 lha bzo ལྷ་བཟོ།
 lha bzo a bu kar lo ལྷ་བཟོ་ཨ་བུ་ཀར་ལོ།
 lung skya ལུང་སྐྱ།
 lung sngon ལུང་སྒོན།
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho sngong མཚོ་སྒོན།
 mtsho sngon ge sar mgur glu 'gran bsdur མཚོ་སྒོན་གེ་སར་མགུར་གླུ་འགན་བཟུར།
 mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒོན་པོ།

pad ma rnam rgyal བད་མ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།
 pad+ma gtum drags rdo rje བད་མ་གཏུམ་དྲགས་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 pad+ma thub bstan dam chos rgya mtsho བད་མ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 rta bo རྟ་བོ།
 rta nag ma རྟ་ནག་མ།
 shakya don 'grub ཤཀ་ཡ་དོན་འགྲུབ།
 skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་བརྟན།
 sngags 'chang སྤགས་འཆང་།
 sngags 'chang gu ru སྤགས་འཆང་གུ་རུ།
 snying thar rgyal སྙིང་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 tshe b+ha ཚེ་བ།

CHINESE TERMS

Dawu 大武
 Gonghe 共和
 Guoluo 果洛
 Hainan 海南
 Heimahe 黑马河
 Qinghai 青海
 Qurang 曲让